

## Message Text

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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/IAI:MDSTERNBERG:LAB

APPROVED BY NEA:ALATHERTON,JR.

S:MR. COVEY

S/S:MR ORTIZ

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 063758

NODIS

EO. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, IS

SUBJECT: SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON

1. AT THE REQUEST OF THE SECRETARY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
ATHERTON SPOKE WITH ISRAELI AMBASSADOR DINITZ ON THE  
EVENING OF MARCH 15 AND AGAIN ON MARCH 16 IN RESPONSE TO  
HIS QUERY RE WHAT INFORMATION WE HAD ON REPORTS THAT  
SYRIAN MILITARY UNITS HAD ENTERED LEBANON.

2. ATHERTON INFORMED DINITZ ON MARCH 15 THAT WE HAD NO  
EVIDENCE OF ANY ACTUAL ENTRY OF SYRIAN FORCES INTO LEBANON.  
WE HAD SOME REPORTS OF POSSIBLE LIMITED MILITARY PREPARA-  
TIONS, BUT THEY WERE FRAGMENTARY AND INCONCLUSIVE. HE  
REPEATED, AT THE SECRETARY'S REQUEST, THAT ANY ISRAELI

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MILITARY MOVES IN REGARD TO LEBANON WITHOUT DISCUSSING

THEM WITH US WOULD CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

3. ON MARCH 16 ATHERTON CONVEYED AS A FOLLOW-UP TO HIS PREVIOUS EVENING'S DISCUSSION WITH DINITZ THE LATEST AVAILABLE INFORMATION. HE TOLD DINITZ THAT SINCE THEY HAD LAST SPOKEN THERE HAD BEEN A REPORT WHICH, WHILE NOT CONCLUSIVE, COULD BE CREDIBLE THAT SEVERAL BATTALIONS OF SYRIAN FORCES HAD ENTERED LEBANON, AND THAT, IF THIS WAS

TRUE, AT LEAST SOME OF THESE HAD ENTERED APPARENTLY AT THE REQUEST OF LEBANESE PRESIDENT FRANGIE. THE MISSION OF THESE FORCES WAS REPORTEDLY TO SEEK TO STABILIZE THE SITUATION IN ORDER TO ALLOW TIME FOR AN ORDERLY POLITICAL TRANSITION IN THE PRESIDENCY, BY RESTRAINING FATAH AND LEFTIST MILITARY FORCES WHO HAVE BEEN THREATENING TO TRY TO REMOVE THE PRESIDENT BY FORCE.

4. ATHERTON UNDERLINED FOR DINITZ THAT WE ARE HOLDING THE REPORT VERY CLOSELY. UNDERSTANDING THAT ISRAEL HAD ITS OWN SOURCES, ATHERTON EMPHASIZED THAT TO THE EXTENT THE INFORMATION CAME FROM US IT SHOULD SIMILARLY BE CLOSELY HELD BY THE ISRAELIS. DINITZ ASSURED ATHERTON THIS WOULD BE DONE.

5. ATHERTON, IN CONCLUDING, NOTED THAT THIS IS A MOST DELICATE MOMENT, AND UNDERScoreD THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR ISRAEL AND THE U.S. TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH ON THE SITUATION. KISSINGER

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